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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [EWWT](#) [PHSA](#) [KCRM](#) [MRSEC](#) [SN](#)
SUBJECT: KL MEETING ON MALACCA STRAIT: GOS URGES MEASURED
USG APPROACH TO SECURITY ISSUE

REF: A. SINGAPORE 2718
[1](#)B. STATE 138300

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: MFA Southeast Asia Deputy Director Foo Chi Hsia asked to meet us September 8 to urge USG patience in pressing for maritime security at the September 18-20 conference in Kuala Lumpur. At the conference, the littoral states would present a new "cooperation mechanism" to enhance navigational safety and environmental protection in the Strait, which represented a substantial step forward in littoral-user state cooperation. Foo was confident that, over time, this framework would be expanded to cover maritime security. Foo asked the USG to endorse the proposal, while warning that too much pressure to include maritime security at the start could backfire. She cited China's offer to support a maritime project by each of the three littoral states as an example of the sophisticated diplomacy China was demonstrating in Southeast Asia and urged a similar USG approach. On the Torres Strait, Foo said further lobbying of Australia at senior levels might help reverse the GOA plans for compulsory pilotage. End Summary.

Cooperation Mechanism for Malacca Strait

[1](#)2. (SBU) MFA Southeast Asia Deputy Director Foo Chi Hsia asked to meet us September 8 to urge USG patience in pressing for maritime security at the second meeting of the littoral and user states of the Strait of Malacca, to be held in Kuala Lumpur September 18-20. Noting our earlier request to include maritime security in the agenda (Ref B), Foo said the littoral states would present a new "cooperation mechanism" that would be a stepping stone to closer work on maritime security. It wouldn't be everything the USG wanted, but represented significant progress on user-littoral state cooperation, she opined.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The "cooperation mechanism" would enhance navigational safety and environmental protection in the Strait of Malacca and have three components: (1) a forum for cooperation; (2) a project committee for littoral states and stakeholders to work on specific proposals; and (3) a fund for countries to contribute to the maintenance and replacement of navigational aids. She was confident that, over time, this framework would be expanded to cover maritime security.

Seeking USG Support

[1](#)4. (SBU) Foo urged the USG to endorse the proposal at the Kuala Lumpur conference, even if it didn't go as far as the USG would like. She warned that too much pressure to include

maritime security at the start could backfire by raising sensitivities over sovereignty in the other littoral states. She reiterated that the GOS would address maritime security in its national statement at the conference and expected that Malaysia and possibly Indonesia would do so as well. Foo added that the "cooperation mechanism" should be in place by the time Singapore hosts the next Tripartite Technical Experts Group (TTEG) meeting in December.

15. (SBU) After the third IMO meeting on Strait of Malacca security in Singapore in 2007, the GOS thought it likely that the IMO would turn its attention elsewhere. Therefore, Singapore envisioned the "cooperation mechanism" as a framework to carry forward after the IMO meetings end and expected it would provide a platform for littoral and user states to work on enhancing maritime security.

Aid from China

16. (SBU) At the Kuala Lumpur meeting, the three littoral states would be seeking support for six projects -- two from each country. Foo noted that China's Minister for Communications, Li Shenglin, had recently visited the region and had promised to support one project from each country. Foo cited this as an example of the kind of sophisticated diplomacy China was conducting in Southeast Asia. Although the assistance China offered might be modest (and she didn't have any details on China's support), it succeeded in appearing even-handed and demonstrating China's concern for each country. She encouraged the USG to adopt a similar approach and consider whether it could provide some support, however modest, for country projects.

Compulsory Pilotage in Torres Strait

17. (SBU) On Australia's plans for compulsory pilotage through the Torres Strait, Foo suggested that further lobbying at senior levels of the GOA might help. FM George Yeo had written to FM Alexander Downer to complain about the GOA decision and its negative impact on larger strategic interests -- and she asserted that FM Downer's staff had seemed unaware of the issue. She added that FM Yeo planned to meet with FM Downer on the margins of UNGA later this month to discuss the matter further and inquired whether the Secretary might also meet FM Downer and raise the issue.

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